



A Great Calm

By Chris Schelich



*Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee (1695),
Ludolf Backhuysen (1630-1708)*

April 1, 2020

*“And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and work him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing.” And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, o you of little faith?” Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the seas, and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and sea obey him?” **Matthew 8:23-27****

I don't really care for being away from shore. While my balance might be manageable in the shifting waves, the breeze and smell of the water having their own value, I'd rather not distance myself too far from dry ground. I grew up in the fields and city blocks; there was no ocean or sea close to me.

I have to imagine that a few of the disciples who were called up in the Gospel while on boats or fishing from the shore knew the risks of the sudden storms that were common on the Sea of Galilee. Maybe they had seen them from the shore or nearly evaded one or two themselves. Maybe they had lost a friend or had been weary after hearing the tragic story of a survivor. They identified as an “at-risk” population given their frequency on the boats. Such storms were turbulent and popped up suddenly. They could splinter a ship to timbers with just a few lashes.

Our Present Storm

In our current situation, we are not buffeted by a sudden storm that we didn't expect to arrive; we are now meeting the storm we saw in the distance. Those of us who lived in the flats of the midwest know the view from miles off as the slow, progressive creep of the storm licked at the trees and lapped at the crops.

This “great” (μέγας) storm we are buffeted by is one that has had us reaching similar conclusions as the disciples. We are running the ship to find our leaders and wake them before the storm causes us to “perish” (ἀπολλύμεθα).

Our natural instincts have all been cued to the front of our minds — Preserve yourself. Our mantra's are caught up in a selfish, yet understandable, bent.

But, Church, let me remind you that the Lord will move. It is interesting that although the synoptic Gospels each hold their own story with slight variations, the exact amount of effort put forth in the storm is matched in the calm instituted by Christ's command. Where the storm is active in Luke, Christ provides a calm; where it is a "great storm" in Matthew and Mark, there is a "great calm" ushered forth from Jesus' rebuke.

Being reassured, the disciples marveled. Some were in awe. All were left with questions.

Our Variations in the Storm

I cannot reassure you concerning the plans made by employers. I don't know what the school year holds for our seniors no matter how desperately I want to know. I can't give you the measure of this quarantine or the impact on our lives. And, while many of us are echoing Peter, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you," I don't want to leave you wanting (Acts 3:6). I want to give you calm.

For some, your storm is just that — a storm. It is a troublesome time and one that is uniquely challenging, but something you'll manage to survive with minimal sacrifice.

For others, your storm is far more — a "great" storm. This situation has brought personal struggle into your home. You may have experienced a cut in your hours or a furlough.

While federal policies may be moving to provide support, you've never been this aware of how scary this situation is. You're not abandoning Christ, but you are seeing the lighting and hearing the thunder louder than before.

The Power of the Spirit

I want to remind you now that the peace you bring with you into a room, into your children's education, into your work environment, into your home, and into your relationships, is appropriately equipped by the Holy Spirit to match the storm that surrounds it. Yes, we should all do what we can, but also allow ourselves the grace to identify your limits and begin to see the provision of God's peace in the scenario. Parent, you may not be trained to be a teacher, and that's okay!

Begin by allowing God to quiet the storm inside your heart, and I'm sure the marvel and awe you experience will contagiously change others so much that they'll identify with the lame beggar and be made strong!

Remember, the church has never acted like those of the world who, "deserted those who began to be sick, and fled from their dearest friends" as accounted by Eusebius during a pestilence. We carry a calm in our hearts that encourages us "to live is Christ; to die is gain!" (Philippians 1:21)

Source(s):

*All Scriptural citations utilize ESV

"The Pestilence Which Came Upon Them," in Eusebius' *Church History VIII.22*

Discussion & Reflection:

- 1.) A lot of things may be out of our control, but what areas do we still have influence over? What can we speak calm into during this season?
- 2.) Our culture loves to *fill* our minds. Instead of using music or television to fill our minds, take 30 minutes a day to enjoy the silence. Notice the calm in your home and in your neighborhood.
- 3.) Make a list of three things you have learned to appreciate in this season. Take time to share that list with someone else. Encourage thankfulness in this time!